

SEATTLE ARTS  
TASK FORCE  
FINAL REPORT  
AND  
RECOMMENDATIONS  
TO THE MAYOR  
AND  
SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL

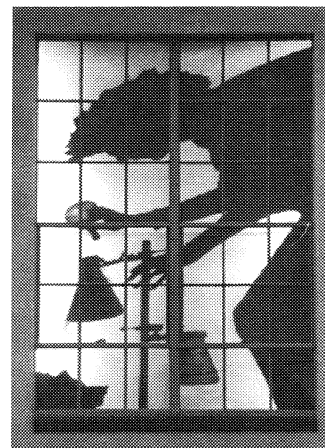


Kathy Magiera, Co-Chair  
Barbara Earl Thomas, Co-Chair  
June, 1999

# SEATTLE ARTS TASK FORCE MEMBERS

The following individuals participated in the Arts Task Force voluntarily at the request of Mayor Paul Schell and City Councilmember Nick Licata. We would like to thank our co-chairs, Kathy Magiera and Barbara Earl Thomas, for the structure and direction they gave to our deliberations over the last seven months. We are grateful to Yazmin Mehdi, Special Assistant to the Mayor, for her guidance and assistance throughout this process.

Gretchen Apgar	Speakeasy Café
Joel Bachar	Blackchair Productions, Independent Film & Video Consortium
Roger Bass	Seattle Arts Commission
Marcella Benditt	Seattle Public Library Foundation
David Brewster	Town Hall Association
Undine Brod	Artists Representing Themselves
Peter Donnelly	Corporate Council for the Arts
Diane Farrar	Langston Hughes Cultural Arts Center
Don Johnson	Kreielsheimer Foundation
Kurt Kiefer	sculptor; University of Washington
Carol Lewis	Coinstar
Kathy Magiera	Seattle Opera Association
Fidelma McGinn	911 Media Arts Center
Charles Mudede	writer; The Stranger
Scott Noegel	Independent Film & Video Consortium
Alma Plancich	Ethnic Heritage Council
Pam Schell	Intiman Theatre former boardmember
Crispin Spaeth	Crispin Spaeth Dance Group
J.T. Stewart	Seattle Central Community College (Humanities Division)
Barbara Earl Thomas	writer, painter; Elliott Bay Books
Judy Whetzel	Seattle Center Foundation



## INTRODUCTION

In September 1998, Mayor Paul Schell and City Councilmember Nick Licata invited a group of artists, arts patrons and arts professionals to collaborate as an Arts Task Force in order to evaluate how the City of Seattle promotes, funds and provides access to the arts, and to recommend future direction. Specifically, the Arts Task Force was asked to address the following questions:

1. In the context of what private organizations and other government agencies do to promote and fund the arts, what should the City's role be? (Are there things we do now that we can relinquish to others? Are there things we should be doing that we are not doing now? What should be our vision?)
2. What is the most appropriate organizational structure to accomplish this vision? (Is the current organizational structure effective with some minor tweaking? Should we consider creating a Department of Arts and Cultural Affairs?)
3. What is an appropriate and stable funding source to support the vision? (What creative, non-General Fund revenue streams could we secure?)

From October 1998 through May 1999, Arts Task Force members convened regularly to discuss these questions.

The Arts Task Force's mission was to help set the City's arts agenda. We provide our recommendations as artists, arts organizations, arts funders and patrons. Although we do not have all the answers, our collective individual experiences form a broad base from which to make recommendations. We expect the City to review our recommendations and use its own expertise to assess each. We hope our colleagues at the Seattle Arts Commission, the City Budget Office, and in other departments performing arts-related functions, will be able to provide insight into how best to implement our ideas and recommendations. We look forward to the City's response and implementation plan.

This report represents the culmination of those efforts. The report contains:

- A **vision statement** for the arts in Seattle,
- Five **priority recommendations**,
- **Roles** the City should assume to support our vision,
- Suggested **funding** sources and mechanisms,
- **Advocacy** roles and recommendations for an effective **organizational structure**,
- Directives for the **City as a landlord** and property owner,
- Recommendations for an **arts resource center**.

## VISION STATEMENT FOR THE ARTS

As a vital part of the City of Seattle, the arts enhance our quality of life. The arts give us the opportunity to express our creativity, to celebrate our cultural diversity, and to create a strong sense of community and civility. Central to our lives, the arts honor our humanity and strengthen the image and economy of the City.

As a legacy for the future, the City has the goal of confirming Seattle as one of the premiere arts cities in the United States. To fulfill this goal, the City will work, in cooperation with others in the community, to ensure that the arts will be considered a basic service by its citizens and by elected officials. The City will provide funding for the arts and ensure accessibility to people of all ages, classes and ethnic backgrounds.

The City will encourage artistic innovation and excellence among individual artists, arts educators and arts institutions. Great cities are defined by the arts. Through the arts we pass on the best of ourselves and the visions of our society to generations yet to come.

# PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

We have identified five priority recommendations for the City. They are followed by 25 additional recommendations (not in priority order) for how the City should contribute to Seattle's arts environment over the next 25 years.

- **Increase funding for individual artists and arts organizations of all sizes.**

City funding for the arts is essential if we are to ensure a healthy and vibrant community. The City's mission should be to provide a continuous funding base for artists and arts organizations across the spectrum. This will ensure that a wide variety of artistic opportunities exist for residents to enjoy, and that a steady flow of artists and arts organizations are able to share their work. Stable funding will also help ensure that people of all ages, classes and ethnic backgrounds have access to the arts.

- **Establish a \$200 Million Public Endowment for the Arts.**

This would require raising about \$15.5 million per year for 10 years with the expectation that it would be invested conservatively, as required by State law, at about 5.5% interest. A concurrent regional effort as well as additional funding sources (outlined in the "City as Funder" section, below), would help strengthen the endowment. A foundation board of private citizens representing the full spectrum of the arts in Seattle would oversee this endowment.

- **Establish a City policy to annually secure 1% of the General Fund to support the Seattle Arts Commission.**

This will cover administration costs and grants-funding, assuming the General Fund is at \$600 million when the policy is enacted. This recommendation should be phased in with the goal of reaching 1% from the General Fund by Fiscal Year 2001.

- **Establish the Seattle Arts Commission as the City Arts Department.**

The Seattle Arts Commission will take a leadership role in identifying, developing and facilitating arts activities with other City departments and throughout the city. In addition to undertaking the recommendations of the Arts Task Force, the Commission will be responsible for the development and management of arts policy and special projects, the public art program, funding for artists and arts organizations, the arts resource center and advocacy programs. The Commission will continue to include a citizens' body with a strong role in artistic decision-making and an advisory role on artistic policy. A division of the Commission will research economic incentives, tax laws, and legal restrictions impacting the vitality and strength of the arts community. Appropriate leadership and staff will be in place to perform these duties.

- **Create a Resource Center.**

The City will provide information and tools to artists, as well as to patrons, citizens and neighborhood groups. These resources should be accessible, educational, enlightening and empowering. The resource center will include the following elements:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1) Interactive On-line Information Center and Archive | 3) Physical Space with Computer Lab and Studio Space |
| 2) Information Distribution                           | 4) Artist Liaison                                    |

## THE CITY'S ROLE IN THE ARTS

The City plays a variety of roles in the arts to varying degrees. An educator, the City sponsors children's painting classes through Department of Parks and Recreation community centers. A benefactor, the City supports many of the city's individual artists and arts organizations through its Seattle Arts Commission. As part of the landscape of the arts, the City contributes venues, funding, education, festivals, information and even works of public art. While all are important, we identified four key roles for the City:

### Funder of the Arts

With the continuing decline in federal government support and the demand for increased arts and cultural opportunities, we feel strongly that the City should enhance its role as funder.

### Advocate for the Arts

Without consistent advocacy, the public and other government agencies cannot comprehend the need for continuing support. The City can help with this message.

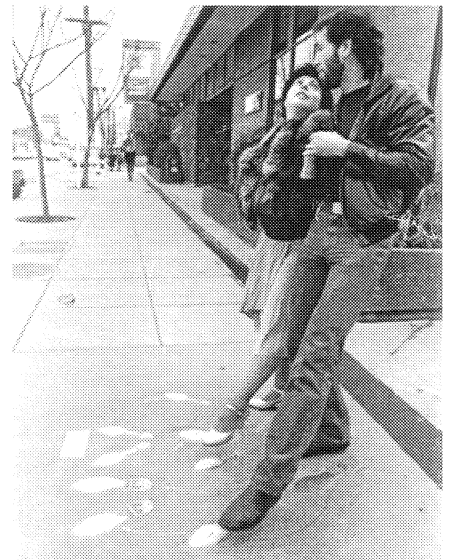
### Property Owner/Landlord-Provider of Work Space and Performance Venues for Arts Organizations

As one of the largest landowners in the city, City government can create opportunities for artists and arts organizations to maximize the use of City facilities throughout Seattle.

### Resource Center

Information is a commodity in this age of technology. For this reason, it is increasingly important that the City provide resources and information, free of charge. A resource center will create partnerships among arts patrons, artists, arts organizations, citizens and neighborhoods.

It is vital that the City enhance each of these roles. While private organizations also perform these functions, the City has the greatest resources, making it a key contributor to all four areas.



# THE CITY AS A FUNDER OF THE ARTS

As we considered the spectrum of artists and arts organizations, from small to large, from traditional to cutting edge, we concluded that all are necessary. Together, they form an ecosystem. Because of their non-profit stature, artists and arts organizations throughout the ecosystem require enhanced assistance. However, individual artists, small and mid-sized organizations require particular attention because they have the most difficulty sustaining themselves. For this reason, we recommend that the City reexamine its interpretation of the constitutional application of funding. Funding should be flexible so that artists are given what they need most. For instance, large organizations would receive money to help complete a particular project, while mid-sized and smaller organizations would receive ongoing assistance. The City should model assistance for smaller organizations after its program for major arts institutions. This flexibility should further extend to neighborhoods and communities who wish to elevate the status of the arts. The City should collaborate with these communities to meet their arts objectives.

To provide citizens with greater access to arts experiences, the City must increase tax incentives to arts-related organizations.

Secondly, the City should work with the Seattle Public Schools to enhance the basic arts curriculum so that kids may participate in, and develop an appreciation for, the arts.

## Recommendations:

### 1. **PRIORITY: Increase funding for individual artists and arts organizations of all sizes.**

City funding for the arts is essential if we are to ensure a healthy and vibrant community. The City's mission should be to provide a continuous funding base for artists and arts organizations across the spectrum. This will ensure that a wide variety of artistic opportunities exist for residents to enjoy, and that a steady flow of artists and arts organizations are able to share their work. Stable funding will also help ensure that people of all ages, classes and ethnic backgrounds have access to the arts.

2. Provide ongoing operational assistance for small and mid-sized arts organizations.
3. Review the City's legal interpretations to assess how City funding may be used to meet operational as well as capital expenses.
4. Undertake a citywide economic impact study of the arts that includes the smallest arts organizations. This would validate their importance to Seattle's cultural and economic life.
5. Create funding opportunities for arts-rich districts, zones, communities or neighborhoods that strongly self-identify with the arts (such as Fremont and Wallingford). Establish a means for these communities to tax themselves in order to pay for arts activities they deem important.

## New Funding Sources:

The Arts Task Force urges the City to explore the following new funding streams for two reasons. First and foremost, our recommendations must be accompanied by significantly increased funding. This funding is necessary for the Seattle Arts Commission to carry out the roles we have described above. Second, additional resources are required to provide the level of support we seek for emerging artists and arts organizations, while continuing to contribute to the work of other artists and arts organizations.

We recognize that many of these recommendations will be challenging to implement. Some require passage of legislation at the state and federal level. However, our intent is to identify various funding alternatives, many of which will necessarily be longer term. We also recognize that we will not secure new revenue streams without an aggressive effort. This effort is well worth the investment.

### 6. **PRIORITY: Establish a \$200 Million Public Endowment for the Arts.**

This would require raising about \$15.5 million per year for 10 years with the expectation that it would be invested conservatively, as required by State law, at about 5.5% interest. A concurrent regional effort would help strengthen the endowment. A foundation board of private citizens representing the full spectrum of the arts in Seattle would oversee this endowment.

## New Taxes:

7. Establish a business tax on non-resident entertainers and athletes who work in Seattle for short periods of time.
8. Investigate taxes on cable companies and Internet Service Providers recognizing this would require passage of federal legislation.
9. Create a Metropolitan Arts District. This would be similar to the proposed Metropolitan Park District.

## Other Funding Strategies:

10. Encourage citizens to make a voluntary contribution when paying their utility bill. Ratepayers would either round up their payments (such as the Working Assets program), or check off a box on their utility bills (such as the Warm Homes Project). This voluntary fee should rotate to different departments, such as Seattle City Light and Seattle Public Utilities. The money would be designated for specific funding the following year or added to the endowment. (In return, the recipient arts organizations could provide enhanced access to the general public, according to their financial capacity and available resources.)
11. Identify strategic partners to supplement arts funding for special projects. Examples include partnering with the Port of Seattle and Chamber of Commerce to support cultural festivals in collaboration with international economic conferences in the region, such as the World Trade Organization conference this fall.
12. Explore the potential of collaborations between the arts and sports communities. An example might be the creation of a citywide marathon or fun-run to celebrate our city.
13. Develop a Public Art program to operate in tandem with the Percent for Art in Public Places. This program should be as visible and creatively leveraged as the Percent program, but would focus on performance, time-based and other art forms.
14. Create incentives to retain a healthy economic climate for the arts community. This could include providing incentives for developers to create live/work spaces or extending tax breaks to arts-centric businesses.





## Expansion of current funding sources:

**15. PRIORITY: Establish a City policy to annually secure 1% of the General Fund to support the Seattle Arts Commission.**

This would cover administration costs and grants-funding, assuming the General Fund is at \$600 million when the policy is enacted. This recommendation should be phased in with the goal of reaching 1% from the General Fund by Fiscal Year 2001.

**16.** Increase the standard retail sales tax by .05 - .1% and designate proceeds to the arts. Expand the 9.1% sales tax category to additional industries such as coffee wholesalers and outdoor equipment manufacturers and retailers.

**17.** Reallocate existing taxes and current user fees. (In the process of reviewing these taxes, new user fees could be identified.)

**18.** Increase the current 1 Percent for Art in Public Places to 1.5%. This has been a very successful program and is accessible to all citizens of Seattle. The additional .5% would address the administrative needs of the program and expand the opportunities to support a greater number of individual visual artists.

**19.** Extend the Percent for Art in Public Places requirement to include all City public/private development projects.

## THE CITY AS ADVOCATE

The City's role as advocate is to provide arts advocacy within and beyond the City. This advocacy should include affirmation of the Mayor's commitment to the arts as the "heart and soul of the City," and therefore, as a basic service. The City should provide leadership that serves as a model for public and private sector patrons, and that raises awareness of the value of the arts to the larger community. We envision the City as a supporter; as a provider of information, technical assistance and networking connections to the local arts community; and, as a facilitator of the arts through provision of space and funding.

In order to support this vision, the Seattle Arts Commission should be empowered with greater oversight and appropriate funding to implement our recommendations.

## Recommendations:

**20. PRIORITY: Establish the Seattle Arts Commission as the City Arts Department.**

The Seattle Arts Commission will take a leadership role in identifying, developing and facilitating arts activities with other City departments and throughout the city. In addition to undertaking the recommendations of the Arts Task Force, the Commission will be responsible for the development and management of arts policy and special projects, the public art program, funding for artists and arts organizations, the arts resource center and advocacy programs. The Commission will continue to include a citizens' body with a strong role in artistic decision-making and an advisory role on artistic policy. A division of the Commission will research economic incentives, tax laws, and legal restrictions impacting the vitality and strength of the arts community. Appropriate leadership and staff will be in place to perform these duties.

**21.** Assess and resolve legal obstacles relevant to the arts community. These include the teen dance ordinance, liquor laws that prevent minors from attending events, and the poster ban which impairs community communication systems.

## THE CITY AS PROPERTY OWNER/LANDLORD

The City's role as property owner/landlord is to provide opportunities for artists and arts organizations to use City facilities at reasonable costs on a temporary or permanent basis. This provides infrastructure for artists, arts organizations and community groups; ensures that City residents and visitors are easily able to participate in the arts throughout Seattle; and, maximizes use of City spaces.

As we considered the scarcity of reasonably-priced performance and exhibition spaces in the city, we discovered that the City owns facilities throughout Seattle. Some are arts facilities, many of which are the products of collaborations with non-profit arts organizations. Others are multiple purpose facilities which could be used for arts classes, performances, exhibitions and meetings. Still others, while not designed for artistic uses, could be utilized by artists and arts organizations to create unique experiences.

The City should take inventory of its facilities, and where possible and safe, make these available for as many arts experiences as possible. Just as segments of the City's Sand Point Naval Air Station have been transformed into a sculpture park, with old hangars turned into temporary stages, the City should repeat this approach with other facilities — particularly those in neighborhoods. The City should complete its efforts in this area by providing assistance to maintain these facilities.

The City should also create partnerships in order to provide spaces. Through the neighborhood planning process, community groups have voiced their interest in these projects. The City must enable these groups to implement their ideas. This could be done by simplifying the permit process, working with private developers or non-profit community development organizations, and through such innovations as artists' residencies in neighborhoods.

The City must also continue to partner with housing developers to provide live/work spaces that can be used by artists as well as others of modest economic means. This measure will help ensure that Seattle retains its artists.

## Recommendations:

**22.** Make under-utilized, City-owned space available to individual artists and arts organizations.

**23.** Establish a maintenance endowment and plan to sustain City-owned buildings used for the arts. This will ensure that these facilities are properly cared for, up-to-code and in a condition the City can be proud of.

**24.** Implement requests in neighborhood plans for new or renovated arts facilities.

**25.** Create incentives for businesses to provide work, performance and/or exhibition space to artists and arts organizations.

26. Create neighborhood artist-in-residence programs to bring attention to the role of individual artists in communities and the City at-large.
27. Secure artists' housing in every neighborhood. This specifically addresses those neighborhoods which are losing artists because of high costs, space availability or zoning.

## THE CITY AS RESOURCE CENTER

The City will provide information and tools to artists, as well as to patrons, citizens and neighborhood groups. These resources should be accessible, educational, enlightening and empowering.

### Recommendations:

#### 28. **PRIORITY: Create a Resource Center.**

The resource center will include the following elements:

*1) Interactive On-line Information Center and Archive.* This on-line clearinghouse will include current lists of and links to arts organizations, individual artists and arts resources in Seattle (arts publications such as Art Access, The Tentacle, Sidewalk, Art Guide Northwest, weekly and daily newspapers); information about funding resources available from the City; and, a "What's New" section and calendar of events, with information that could be searched and retrieved by date, name or text. This section would also include on-line forms for people to submit their own events and resources. In addition, a telephone version of this service, much like the quick information person at the library, would provide information in various languages. This same information could also be provided via public access cable or information kiosks.

*2) Information Distribution.* Eventually, this office would physically distribute information to various community institutions (such as community centers and schools).

*3) Physical Space with Computer Lab and Studio Space.* This space would allow artists and arts organizations to create flyers, posters and press releases. This may be a newly-appointed space, or might be added to enhance existing library or community resource centers. Eventually, this should include studio space.

*4) Artist Liaison.* The liaison would help new and emerging artists navigate the City's resources.

The City should review various options for funding the resource center including, contacting History Link, using sliding scale fees, and utilizing existing City resources.

29. Create a marketing/communications plan for the arts. The City should hire a public relations firm to guide creation of the plan.
30. Create networking opportunities in which artists could exchange information about available performance, exhibition and live/work space, as well as other arts-relevant issues.

## CONCLUSION

The Arts Task Force trusts that its body of recommendations will be used to set the City's arts agenda. We expect the City to review and respond to our recommendations before developing an implementation plan. We are confident that our colleagues at the Seattle Arts Commission and throughout City government, will execute our directives to the greatest extent possible, and in doing so, advance our vision of a city in which artists and arts organizations may thrive.

### A Note on Consensus

We used consensus in making our decisions. We defined consensus to mean that everyone could live with the decisions, though there might be differing levels of support among the members of the Arts Task Force. Members used the following options to indicate their level of support:

1. Wholehearted – I love the recommendations
2. I support the recommendations if they are good / they are fine the way they are
3. I am willing to support the recommendations, although I wish to state my concern or lack of satisfaction with:
4. I am willing to support the recommendations ONLY if the following change is made or condition is met:
5. I do not support the recommendations (this effectively vetoes consensus)

The five priority recommendations, the balance of the report in total, and the vision statement all received levels of support 1, 2, or 3 above.

